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ANOTHER ROMAN HOLIDAY

THE NEW YEARS CELEBRATION IN ANCIENT ROME WAS TRADITIONALLY ONE OF THE the biggest time of the year

MOST ELABORATE AND WILDEST SPECTACLES THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN. SEVEN DAYS

BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR THE ROMAN'S BEGAN A WEEK OF FROLICING:

DRINKING AND DANCING, CLEBRATION THAT GRADUALLY INCREASED IN VELOCITY TO THE

WORST SORT OF ORGISTIC DEBACHERY. EVERYONE JOINED IN EVERYONE WENT TO THE Drunken Buisness + trade stopped → everything came to a standstill

ARENA AND SHOUTED FOR GLEE AS WARRIERS MURDERED EACH OTHER, OR AS LIONS TORE APART

CRIMINALS. NO MATTER HOW ~~EXIXT~~ QUIET AND CONSERVATION A PERSON MIGHT BE--DURING THAT Wine, women + song - in the streets, markets - Roman decadence at its worst

WEEK HE LET HIS HAIR DOWN AND JOINED THE FUN.

But THERE WAS ONE GROUP, HOWEVER, THAT WANTED NO PART OF THIS PAGAN HOLOCAST

AND THAT WAS THE CHRISTIANS. THE ROMAN'S DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING AGAINST THIS You know about persecutions - they weren't brought about by Rom. hatred of Christ Really

NEW RELIGION ONE MORE GOD WOULDN'T MATTER. BUT WHAT ENFURIATED THEM WAS THAT + prompted persecut

THE CHRISTIANS WOULDN'T ACCEPT THEIR GOD'S TOO, ~~THEY~~ Christians WOULDN'T ADMIT THAT

THEIR GOD WAS JUST ONE OUT OF MANY. ~~THAT IS~~ ALL THE ROMAN'S ASKED JUST A was the Christians refused

SMALL COMPROMISE. THIS WAS ALL BROUGHT TO A HEAD DURING THE NEW YEAR

CELEBRATION. THE CHRISTIANS WOULDN'T PLAY. THEY WOULDN'T JOIN THE WILD THRONGS

IN THEIR ORGY. THEY WERE ANTI SOCIAL STUCK UP. + they were persecuted for it.

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS TO

RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO JOIN THE FUN. ~~MORE THAN LIKELY~~ MANY A CHRISTIAN ~~JUST~~

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SNEAKED OUT FOR AWHILE TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON, JUST TO INDULGE A LITTLE BIT. And many joined to preserve his life

TO COUNTERACT THIS OCCASION OF WIDNESS ABOUT THEM, TO ELIMINATE THE TEMPTATION TO JOIN THE FUN, THE CHRISTIANS DECIDED TO HAVE THEIR OWN WEEK LONG FESTIVAL. THEY DECIDED TO CELEBRATE THE GREATEST EVENT THEY COULD THINK OF, THE BIRTH OF THEIR LORD. UNTIL ~~THE END OF THE 1ST CENTURY~~ this time, THERE WAS NO PARTICULAR CELEBRATION OF JESUS' BIRTH. IT WAS THOUGHT THAT HE WAS BORN IN MARCH OR APRIL, BUT NOW FOR EXPEDIENCY THEY PLACED HIS BIRTH ON DECEMBER 25, THE SAME DAY THAT THE ROMAN CELEBRATION BEGAN, ONE WEEK BEFORE THE NEW YEAR. THEY WOULD SPEND A WEEK OF REJOICING IN THEIR OWN WAY, INSTEAD OF SNEAKING OFF TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ROMAN CELEBRATION THEY WOULD HAVE THEIR OWN ATTRACTION, CHRISTMAS. - not in drunke debauchery but in prayer + thanksgiving

Thus — THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTMAS AS A HOLIDAY AT THE END OF THE YEAR CAME ABOUT TO AVOID BEING CAUGHT UP IN THE CELEBRATION OF A CULTURE THAT WASN'T CHRISTIAN, A PAGAN CULTURE.

IRONY of all Ironies originally to combat a pagan festival

NINETEEN HUNDRED YEARS LATER WE ARE RIGHT BACK WHERE WE STARTED FROM. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR SITUATION AND THAT OF A FIRST CENTURY ROMAN CHRISTIAN IS SLIGHT. WE LIVE IN A CULTURE THAT HAS USURPED THE NAME CHRISTMAS, HAS EXPLOITED IT, TWISTED ITS MEANING COMPLETELY. WE ARE FACED WITH THE SAME GRAVE ENCOUNTER

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AS FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS--A GIGANTIC PAGAN ORGY, BEAUTIFUL AND LAVISH, VERY TEMPTING TO JOIN AND HAVING NOTHING WATSOEVER TO DO WITH THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST. WE ARE FACED WITH ANOTHER ROMAN HOLIDAY!

LET US FOR A MINUTE PRETEND THAT WE ARE OUTSIDERS, FROM ANOTHER PLANET VISITING THE UNITED STATES AT THE END OF DECEMBER, THE TIME WHEN THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF A SAVIOR IS TO TAKE PLACE, A VERY HOLY PERIOD. A FEW FACTS QUICKLY MEET OUR EYE, FACTS THAT ARE SOMEWHAT CONFUSING. THE GREATEST COMMERCIAL TRADING OF THE YEAR IS TAKING PLACE, PROFITS ARE ZOOMING, WE DETECT THAT PEOPLE ARE PREPARING FOR PARTIES, MORE ALCOHOL IS BOUGHT AND CONSUMED THERE DURING THE REST OF THE YEAR PUT TOGETHER. WE HEAR THAT BETWEEN DEC. 23 AND JAN. 1 MORE PEOPLE ARE ARRESTED FOR DRUNKEN DRIVING THAN DURING THE OTHER ELEVEN MONTHS OF THE YEAR. WE SEE LIGHTS, DECORATION, TOYS, WREATHS, BOTTLES, IT LOOKS LIKE A WONDERFUL TIME. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SAVIOR THIS BIRTH WE ARE CELEBRATING. WELL, ITS OBVIOUS, IT MUST NOT BE TOO IMPORTANT IT'S LOST IN THE RUSH. WE ARE APPROACHED BY A MAN, HE SAYS, [COME ON--LET YOUR HAIR DOWN, IT'S THE BIRTHDAY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD--HAVE A DRINK!]

get with it

Christmas

I DON'T THINK I HAVE TO PUSH IT ANY FURTHER, YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. YOU'RE AWARE OF THE CROSS COMMERCIALISM THAT HAS BECOME SO IMPORTANT PART OF CHRISTMAS. I DO HOWEVER WANT TO RAISE ONE MORE QUESTION. IT IS A SUBJECT THAT IS A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE TO DISCUSS, AND ANYONE THAT TALKS ABOUT IT TOO LOUDLY IS USUALLY FROWNED UPON. I WILL TAKE THAT CHANCE. MY QUESTION IS WHAT DOES THIS BRIGHTLY DRESSED, WHITE BEARDED FELLOW HAVE TO DO WITH CHRISTMAS. I DREAD THE TIME WHEN I WILL HAVE TO FACE THIS PROBLEM DIRECTLY WHEN MY DAUGHTER IS A FEW YEARS OLDER. I DON'T KNOW HOW I'LL HANDLE IT, BUT I DO KNOW THAT THE ONLY ROLE THIS MYTH CAN PLAY IN CHRISTMAS IS ONE THAT WILL DETRACT FROM THE HOLINESS OF THE EVENT.

AT HEART THE IDEA ISN'T A BAD ONE, A KINDLY OLD MAN THAT GIVES PRESENTS OUT OF THE GOODNESS OF HIS HEART. BUT HE HAS BECOME MORE THAN THAT: HE HAS BECOME THE MEANS FOR BRIBERY, FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR. HE HAS BECOME THE FOCUS OF WHAT I SHALL CALL A "GET-ORIENTED" CHRISTMAS. BECAUSE OF HIM CHRISTMAS IS A TIME WHEN OUR CHILDREN GET, BECAUSE OF HIM THE BEAUTY OF GIVING HAS BEEN LOST.

PERHAPS WE OUGHT TO CHANGE DATES AGAIN. OUR CELEBRATION IS NO COMPETITION FOR THE PAGAN FESTIVAL, PERHAPS WE SHOULD CALL DEC. 25 YULE TIME OR SANTA CLAUS

DAY AND CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST IN FEBRUARY.

I DON'T THINK THERE IS THE SLIGHTEST POSSIBILITY FOR THIS EVER TO HAPPEN. NOR DO I THINK THE CULT OF SANTA CLAUS WILL DIMINISH SO WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE THE BEST OF THE SITUATION, TO EMPHASIZE THAT PART OF THE CELEBRATION THAT IS SYMBOLIC OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. To extract from the festivities that which still is important

WE CAN START BY TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO BE "GIVE ORIENTED" INSTEAD OF "GET ORIENTED". WE CAN BEGIN BY EMPHASIZING THAT CHRISTMAS IS A TIME WHEN WE GIVE PRESENTS. AND WHY DO WE DO THIS? BECAUSE MANY YEARS AGO GOD GAVE US THE MOST WONDERFUL GIFT IMAGINABLE, A TINY BABY, A BABY THAT WAS HIS SON, AND WHO WOULD GROW UP TO OUR FRIEND AND SAVIOR. WE GIVE PRESENTS BECAUSE THE LOVE THAT GOD SHOWED TO US IN THE BIRTH OF THAT BABY MAKES US LOVE EACH OTHER. GIFTS ARE JUST OUR WAY OF SHOWING THAT LOVE. (Not a means for getting the dishes washed

Pause

UP UNTIL NOW I HAVE TAKEN A PRETTY NEGATIVE VIEW OF OUR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION. BUT ALL IS NOT LOST. THERE IS ONE PROMINENT PART OF CHRISTMAS THAT IS A REMNANT OF CHRISTIANITY IN DISGUISE, IT IS THE PHENOMENON WE CALL CHRISTMAS SPIRIT.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT IS HARD TO DEFINE AND TO DESCRIBE, BUT WHO CAN DENY ITS PRESENCE IN THE CIRCLE OF FACES SINGING SILENT NIGHT, OR IN THE BEAUTY OF A FAMILY TOGETHER ONCE AGAIN ON CHRISTMAS DAY. CHRISTMAS EVE IS THE ONE TIME OF THE YEAR THAT MAN'S POTENTIAL TO BE A LOVING CREATURE BREAKS THROUGH. THE WORD BROTHERHOOD SEEMS TO HAVE REAL MEANING ON CHRISTMAS EVE, THERE IS A WARMTH OF HUMANESS AND GOODNESS THAT PERVADES THE ATMOSPHERE, THE LOVE THAT HAS BEEN HIDDEN INSIDE OF US FOR SO LONG REACHES THE OVER FLOWING POINT, AND IT POURS FORTH. - This is Christmas spirit

~~And I think~~

IN THE PHENOMENON OF CHRISTMAS SPIRIT WE CAN PARTIALLY KNOW THE LOVE AND GOODNESS OF GOD. IN THE AFFECTION WE FEEL FOR EACH OTHER WE CAN FEEL IN PART THE LOVE THAT PROMPTED GOD TO GIVE THE CHIRST: THE ETERNAL CONCERN THAT PROMPTED HIM TO APPROACH MAN IN THE SELFLESS ACT OF GIVING, OF HIMSELF THAT WE MIGHT HAVE A SAVIOR.

SELFLESSNESS IS THE BASIS OF TRUE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT. IT IS THE WARMTH THAT OCCURS WHEN FOR THE MOMENT WE FORGET OURSELVES AND ARE OVERJOYED AT BEING WITH PEOPLE WE LOVE: IT IS THE MAGNIFICENT ~~RHYTHM~~ glow WE EXPERIENCE WHEN WE HAVE GIVEN A GIFT--NOT BECAUSE WE WERE OBLIGATED BUT BECAUSE WE LOVE THE PERSON TO WHOM IT WAS GIVEN.

THIS IS ALL PART OF OUR CHRISTMAS AND IT WAS PART OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS. IT IS A FRAGMENT OF LOVE, THE LOVE THAT GOD HAS SHOWN TO US.

THIS APPEARANCE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE IS ALSO A BIT SAD. AT CHRISTMAS WE BRIEFLY EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF LOVE, WE BRIEFLY EXPERIENCE WHAT COULD BE YEAR AROUND. ~~Christmas can be our example~~ WE PROVE WE ARE CAPABLE OF IT AT CHRISTMAS WHY CAN'T EVERY DAY BE LIKE CHRISTMAS? We proove that love & concern are in us - they show up in Christmas spirit - they can be here always

WE CAN LOOK TO CHRISTMAS AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE WAY GOD INTENDED MEN TO BEHAVE. CHRISTMAS IS THE MANIFESTATION OF BROTHERHOOD THAT IS A POSSIBIL'TY ALWAYS--ELABORATE HERE. ~~love for basic~~ concern - Brotherhood - ~~they can be always~~

Getting back to Roman Holiday

RECNETLY CHRISTIANS HAVE BECOME AWARE OF THE PREDICAMENT THEY FACED AT CHRISTMAS. THE PHRASE "PUT CHRIST BACK INTO CHRISTMAS" SUDDENLY EMERGED AND BECAME VERY POPULAR. THERE WERE EVEN CAMPAGINS TO ELIMINATE THE SPELLING OF "CHRISTMAS" WITH AN X IN ORDER TO REEMPHASIZE CHRIST.

WHAT WOULD BE A BETTER PROJECT WOULD BE TO EMPHASIZE THAT THERE IS SIMPLY NO ROOM TO SQUEEZE CHRIST IN IF WE LEAVE THE PAGAN CELEBRATION AS IT IS. WHAT WE MUST DO IS REORIENT THE ENTIRE CELEBRATION, STARTING WITH THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST.

~~HE IS NOT PART OF CHRISTMAS--HE IS CHRISTMAS.~~

WE MUST TEAR DOWN THE ELABORATE STRUCTURE OF SANTA CLAUSES, COMMERCIALISM, ELECTRIC TRAINS LIGHTS AND PARTIES --PUSH THEM ASIDE, AND IN THE VACANCY PUT THE CHRIST. IN HIM WE SEE THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD: WE DON'T NEED SANTA TO SYMBOLIZE THE SPIRIT OF GIVING THE FIGURE OF THE CHRIST SUFFICES VERY WELL INDEED.

I'M NOT URGING DOING AWAY WITH ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE CHRISTMAS WHAT IT IS. I LOVE THEM AS MUCH AS ANYONE. I AM, HOWEVER, URGING THAT WE PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST -- THAT OUR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION BE THE RESULT OF GOD'S GIFT OF JESUS CHRIST. THAT WE HAVE TREES AND GIVE PRESENTS BECAUSE WE FEEL THE LOVE OF GOD.

JESUS CHRIST IS NOT PART OF CHRISTMAS HE IS THE VERY REASON FOR IT. HIS BIRTH IS NOT JUST A BIT OF RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT THAT ADDS TO THE HOLIDAY HIS BIRTH IS CHRISTMAS.

LET US NOT GET CAUGHT UP IN ANOTHER PAGAN HOLIDAY.